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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY

USSR (Estonia)

SUBJECT

Life in Soviet Slave Labor Camps/Attitude of
Prisoners in Anticipation of Release/People
longing for War and American Liberation/Dis-
appointment in the US.

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1. Improvements: "Life in general in the slave camps in the USSR has improved considerably since 1952. Then the food norms were raised and apart from bread (650 grams) and soup twice a day, the prisoners even got porridge two times daily. This made it reasonably sure that one could survive and no longer feared starving to death. Moreover, the prisoners could count on receiving the food they were entitled to get. The authorities did everything in their power to see to it that the prisoners got their food. If something happened which made it impossible to distribute the food properly -- a breakdown in the bakeries, e.g., - it was the general rule that the missing food was added to the next day's quota.

2. Money & Food: "Since 1952, the prisoners have received pay for their labor. Expenses for their lodgings and food were deducted from the pay before it was paid out to the prisoners, but now and then it happened that they really could get some money, which could then be spent in the camp canteen.

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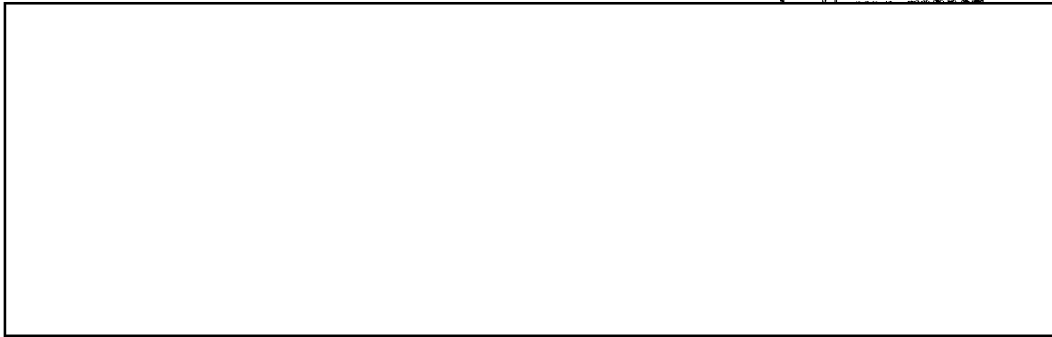
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4. Life in Labor Camps - Life on Kolkhozes: "Although the life of the slave workers is terrible, it is a mistake to suppose that theirs is the hardest life in the USSR. The kolkhozniks, although nominally free, are much worse off still. Thanks to the inefficiency of the system, all agricultural works are hopelessly delayed, the haymaking goes on until October, the harvest until snows, and potatoes are dug from frozen earth. Prisoners kept receiving letters from the kolkhozes at home telling how townspeople had been commandeered to dig the potatoes in December on the kolkhoz fields. While in the labor camp a certain minimum quantity of food is guaranteed which makes it possible to exist, no such guarantee exists in the kolkhozes, and after the state has taken the compulsory delivery quotas, the kolkhozniks have to search themselves to get enough food to survive. The earnings of the kolkhoz peasants are miserably low.

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The inmates of the labor camps, who are perfectly well aware of the conditions in the countryside, look with a certain anxiety towards their liberation. Most of the prisoners who were got sentences of 8-10 years and so can expect to be released in a year or two. As no political prisoners are allowed to return home after their release but must settle in the vicinity of the camps, the prisoners are afraid they will not be able to earn enough after their release to keep from starving.

5. Sentences: Of course, although one has been sentenced to a certain number of years, one cannot be absolutely sure that he is actually going to be released after having served his sentence. The release is not executed automatically but a certain agency decides on this and if it chooses, it can refuse to release the prisoner in question.

6. Hope for War: "Everybody is longing and hoping for a war. Every spring it is rumored that war will break out in the autumn, and every autumn it is said that it will break out next spring. The most fantastic stories are told:

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[REDACTED] in the Central Prison in Tallin it was said that one winter day there had been a spiritual seance in a cell. The medium had been excellent and had said that certain prisoners would receive a parcel soon, and foretold exactly what the parcel would contain. Of course, the medium was asked when they would be free again. He said he saw something, but he was not sure about the time. It was, cold, anyhow, and the trees were barren, but there was no longer any snow when all the seven prison gates would be opened by a foreign army, the Soviets had left, and all the prisoners were released. Soon afterwards, [REDACTED] the MVD prison, etc., and it was [REDACTED] to the Central Prison. The spring had come and gone - and everybody had thought that the medium had meant the spring - and nothing had happened at all.

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Only one little detail was changed in it: now the medium was reported to have said that he had seen barren trees - but not yet any snow. And of course, everybody believed it and was sure that war would break out in the autumn.

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6. Disappointment in the USA: "When Eisenhower became President, everybody was very much excited and hopeful. His first speeches and promises of liberty to all people, and the official declarations that policy of containment was now at an end and the policy of liberation would be inaugurated, spread like wildfire all over the country and were unconditionally believed. However, as high as the hopes had been, as great too was the disappointment when months and months passed and nothing happened. The people feel that they have been let down. They feel they have been promised help from the US, and they have received nothing; they feel they have been promised freedom, and they are still slaves. US prestige has suffered considerable damage and US popularity has fallen. People cannot understand why the US, which in their opinion is the most powerful country in the world, tolerates the Soviet tyranny without doing anything about it apart from making bombastic promises.

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